



UK Government

Government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review

November 2025

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Foreword

Education is our shared endeavour to shape the future for our society. Together we pass on our knowledge, skills and values to the generations ahead – so that they can forge new paths and seize new opportunities. At the centre sits our curriculum, the common entitlement of every child.

The world in which our children are growing up today is changing more rapidly than ever. To prepare them to adapt and excel in the 2030s and beyond, our curriculum must bring together knowledge and skills into a powerful partnership for learning. That begins with strong foundations – the subjects that unlock all others, the best start for all our children.

That is the approach the government will take and which the Review has informed so powerfully. Excellence in maths will provide the problem-solvers of tomorrow. A love of reading will help young people navigate an uncertain world where fiction is too often dressed up as fact. A mastery of listening, speaking and writing will help them express their thoughts, present their ideas, and find their voice.

We'll teach our young people to think critically and act thoughtfully, armed with the digital, financial and media literacy they need to thrive in the modern world. Rather than produce passive consumers of information and disinformation, we must encourage our young people to go further. I want them to be clear-sighted, drawing on a store of knowledge to be questioning and sceptical about the information now so readily at their fingertips, but also to share in the sense of wonder about our world that is so precious a part of our human condition. For every child we must shift from a narrow conception of what they need to know, to deliver a breadth of knowledge, skills and opportunities that sets them up to achieve and thrive.

For that, we need a curriculum rich in knowledge and broad in scope. The enrichment which has for too long been the privilege of a lucky few must now become the entitlement of a whole generation. A revitalised arts offer will spark their creativity. Access to sports, culture and nature will expand their horizons. Civic engagement will stretch their abilities beyond the classroom and prepare them for our democratic and inclusive society – not just speaking up and speaking out but listening to the voices of others too.

And this education of depth and breadth must be the common entitlement of all children. For too long, too many have been trapped in a cycle of poor outcomes and rising disengagement. White working-class children, children with SEND, the children who are bright but bored – these are the children with the most to gain from an ambitious, future-focused curriculum.

Our curriculum will take those children from forgotten to included, and set them up for success. But we can only do that by supporting our teachers to bring it to life in their schools. With access to the best resources, our teachers will help children expand their learning across traditional subject boundaries, engaging them as never before. Together,

we'll ignite their curiosity. We'll nurture their talents. We'll grow a love of learning that will carry them through school and on into rich and fulfilling lives.

I want to thank Professor Becky Francis and the expert review panel for bringing us closer to that precious goal. The recommendations of our independent Curriculum and Assessment Review will help us create a world-class curriculum rich in knowledge, strong on skills, and taught by top-class teachers.

My thanks as well to all those who shared their experience and expertise – everyone from across the sector and beyond. But our collaboration can't end here. Our task is to prepare our young people to be not just the skilled employees of tomorrow, but the citizens: the artists and scientists, teachers and campaigners, entrepreneurs and trade unionists, match-goers and museum-goers, carers and parents. So, from consultation to classroom, our national curriculum must be a collective responsibility. With this common entitlement we will shift from children and their families withdrawing from the importance and purpose of education to engaging in the love and the power of learning once again.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bridget Phillipson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Bridget" and the surname "Phillipson" clearly legible.

The RT Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, Secretary of State for Education

Introduction

This government's ambition is for every child and young person to receive a rich and broad, and inclusive and innovative education. A good-quality curriculum should support educational success, ignite curiosity, introduce fresh perspectives and lay the foundations for a rich and fulfilling life and career. Whilst many young people are succeeding through the current system, too many are still leaving full-time education without the essential knowledge and skills they need to thrive and adapt in a rapidly changing world. As this government looks ahead, the challenge is clear: we must ensure our whole education system raises aspirations and standards for every child and young person – without exception. That means that every child and young person has access to a curriculum that stretches, challenges and prepares them to seize the opportunities of the future.

The national curriculum should raise the floor for all without adding any limit to ambition or achievement. That is why, in July 2024, the Secretary of State commissioned Professor Becky Francis CBE and an external panel of experts to “ensure that the curriculum appropriately balances ambition, excellence, relevance, flexibility and inclusivity for all our children and young people”¹.

At the time the Review was created, we asked Professor Francis and her Panel to consider the best available evidence to inform their work. It is clear that the Review has drawn on a vast wealth of data and breadth of engagement with children, young people, school and college staff, parents, employers and educational experts. We, the Department for Education (DfE), are confident that this has shaped a set of robust and evidence-informed recommendations that, taken together, will improve outcomes for all children and young people.

We wish to thank Professor Francis and the Panel for their expertise, thoughtfulness and dedication over the course of the Review. We also wish to thank those who have shared their experience and views both with the Review and with the DfE.

¹ Curriculum and Assessment Review - terms of reference

Executive summary

The government is focussed on securing an excellent education for every child and young person, raising aspirations for all. We welcome the recommendations of the Review which share this aim and reflect its original intent: that it should build on what is working well and address challenges where they exist. In taking forward the work of the Review, the government is determined to deliver a stretching, rewarding curriculum for every child.

We agree with the Review's focus on maintaining and improving an aspirational curriculum that gives pupils the opportunity to enjoy mastering new content that both stretches and stimulates them. We will ensure that every subject in the revised national curriculum programmes of study continues to set out key content, including a rich spine of knowledge with aligned disciplinary skills that guides teachers to deliver high-quality, well-sequenced lessons.

The Review has further highlighted the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum entitlement up to age 16 in giving young people the opportunity to access an essential core of knowledge and skills, which can be developed further post-16. Each subject in the national curriculum plays a vital role in a child's education. Of course, the national curriculum is not the entire school curriculum, but instead is a statement of what every child is entitled to, with schools able to build on this locally.

We will maintain the existing structural architecture of subjects, key stages, assessments and qualifications – including national primary assessments, GCSEs, T Levels and A levels, making improvements where the Review has recommended that change is needed.

We are pleased to see that, post-16, the Review shares the government's affirmation of the value of achieving at least a grade 4 in GCSE English and maths, and we welcome the Review's focus on improving pathways for young people that cover academic, vocational and technical ambitions, as well as upholding the value of occupational competence.

There are many strengths and practices that have driven improvements across our education system. However, we cannot be complacent when we know that the current system is not working well for far too many children and young people. We want to ensure that the curriculum enables all children and young people to master key content and skills to progress and succeed in later life. We also want to refresh the curriculum so that it helps pupils to build on what they already know, fostering a love of learning.

The Review has recommended a series of changes that will further improve our curriculum so that it is world leading, helps us to work towards narrowing attainment gaps, and ensures that all students can enjoy and benefit from excellence. We will be guided by the Review's principles to refresh the national curriculum so that it enables all

pupils to achieve deep subject mastery and high standards, secure solid foundations in English and maths and develop the skills they need to be ready for the future. Alongside this, the recommendations will, once implemented, ensure the assessment system remains rigorous, whilst also ensuring the overall volume of assessment is more manageable for students. Improvements to post-16 pathways will ensure that young adults have secure foundations in English and maths and are offered exciting vocational and technical options.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Create a world-leading curriculum** - to enable pupils to achieve subject mastery and a secure understanding of the curriculum, we will refresh the programmes of study for each curriculum subject in line with the Review's recommendations and publish a revised national curriculum in 2027 for first teaching in 2028. We will also update GCSEs, for first teaching from 2029 onwards. In doing so, we will follow the curriculum principles of coherence, subject mastery and depth – making sure that programmes of study and subject content are grounded in relevant and important knowledge and disciplinary skills. In languages we will consider the feasibility of qualifications that recognise pupils' achievements earlier than GCSE and can motivate them to continue studying and developing their language abilities.
- **Improve arts education** - we will revitalise arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects.
- **Create a fully digital and easily navigable version of the national curriculum** - we will create a rich, connected online version of the curriculum which visually represents the links within and between subject areas and gives connections to prior learning, helping teachers to contextualise learning across traditional subject boundaries in the classroom.
- **Deliver high standards for all** - we will raise standards in oracy, reading and writing from the early years and into secondary. We are building on our Best Start in Life Strategy to raise standards in the early years, boosting access to high quality early education and care, and supporting families to develop children's language and learning at home through our Best Start Family Hubs. This includes new training and development for reception year teachers which will collectively help to deliver our ambition for 90% of children to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check alongside expanded support for children with SEND to access phonics and improve their reading. We will raise standards in maths through expanding our Securing Foundations in Year 7 programme and through our Higher Level Maths Achievement Programme to support disadvantaged children to achieve highly in their GCSEs and beyond. We will improve key stage

3 education through our new well-sequenced curriculum, our new regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) key stage 3 Alliance to mobilise and spread best practice in key stage 3 teaching regionally and locally, and a stronger focus on assessment. We will develop evidence-led resources to support teachers in adapting the curriculum for all children and young people, including those with SEND. For pupils who can achieve more, we will support teachers to identify, engage and challenge these students, using adapted curriculum materials to stretch pupils during curriculum time and through extra-curricular opportunities that build their love of learning. We will help every child build a love of reading with our 2026 National Year of Reading.

- **Prepare young people for life and careers in a changing world** - we will ensure that subject-specific disciplinary skills including critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving are clearly articulated in the relevant refreshed programmes of study, as well as opportunities to practise social and emotional attributes such as resilience. A new oracy framework will support primary teachers to ensure their pupils become confident, fluent speakers and listeners by the end of key stage 2, and our new secondary oracy, reading and writing framework will enable secondary teachers to connect and embed all three of those vital skills in each of their subjects as part of a whole school strategy. We will ensure that vital applied knowledge and skills in financial, media and digital literacy are embedded into the revised curriculum, and we will improve climate and sustainability education, in the relevant subjects. We will work with employers to create opportunities for bringing the curriculum to life, engaging pupils by supporting them to understand the relevance of their learning to their future career.
- **Improve accountability and assessment** - We will improve the assessment of writing at key stage 2 with greater focus on fluent writing and introduce a new statutory national assessment of reading fluency and comprehension in Year 8. We will expect all schools to assess pupil progress in writing and maths in Year 8 and will support them to select the right products to do this. We will consult on Progress 8 options to ensure that pupils can access a strong academic core and a breadth of subjects, including creative subjects. Working with the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), we will ensure we retain the rigour of exams whilst reducing the amount of time pupils spend in GCSE exams by 2.5-3 hours on average.
- **Post-16 English and maths** - we will introduce new English and maths preparation for GCSE level 1 qualifications which will consolidate students' skills and knowledge before then progressing to GCSE.
- **16-19 reform** - we will ensure a range of high-quality technical, academic and vocational pathways including those that support occupational competency at level

2. We will streamline the confusing landscape of hundreds of different qualifications at 16-19 and replace it with a clearer offer of level 2 qualifications and a simple framework of A levels, T Levels and V Levels at level 3 to give academic, technical and vocational options that are high quality and respected.

- **Ensure that schools and teachers are ready for the new curriculum** - we will provide time for familiarisation and high-quality digital resources through Oak National Academy (Oak) and curriculum support, including through our RISE English and maths hubs, our online curriculum continuous professional development programmes, a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education and new PE and Sports partnerships.

In addition to the core national curriculum and assessment system, the government is determined that every child has access to a wide range of enriching activities that broaden their horizons, stretch their abilities and build wider skills. We will:

- **Provide an enrichment entitlement for every child**, to ensure broad opportunities, within and beyond the curriculum, during and after the school day. We will set out a new core enrichment offer that every school and college should provide for every one of their pupils, which delivers access to civic engagement; arts and culture; nature, outdoor and adventure; sport and physical activities; and developing wider life skills. In line with their new inspection framework, Ofsted will consider how schools are meeting enrichment expectations when judging the personal development grade. The enrichment framework will be extended to further education settings, so that students gain a broad range of experiences and opportunities that help them to thrive.

Towards a world-leading curriculum

We agree with the Review that a broad and balanced curriculum entitlement up to age 16 gives young people the opportunity to access an essential core of knowledge and skills. We strongly agree that each subject in the national curriculum plays a vital role in a child's education.

We welcome the Review's articulation of a refreshed and improved national curriculum that is knowledge-rich, broad, inclusive and innovative, coherent across key stages and secures a deep understanding in each subject through prioritising curriculum content that will lead to the mastery of core concepts. The Review's recommended approach to curriculum revisions provides a clear framework for building on the elements of the curriculum that are working well and should be maintained, grounded in the latest evidence nationally and globally. **We will adopt the Review's curriculum principles including on depth, specificity, coherence, mastery of core concepts, knowledge, professional autonomy and representation. In adopting the principles, we will also ensure that teachers are empowered to choose evidence-based approaches to teach the new curriculum.**

The Review also reflects the evidence that a curriculum that is rich in powerful knowledge² can promote equality by giving everyone access to the same cultural references and give all pupils the knowledge and skills they need to engage with the changing world around them. The evidence shows that learning happens when pupils draw on previous knowledge to make sense of new ideas³, and this allows pupils to understand more complex concepts including developing subject-specific disciplinary skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. We will ensure that the revised national curriculum remains knowledge-rich⁴ and enables students to develop disciplinary skills⁵, setting students up to achieve in life and work.

We agree with the Review's recommendations that the programmes of study should be focussed on prioritising the mastery of core concepts and be constructed with careful sequencing within and between subjects. As the Review sets out, both are vital for ensuring effective pupil progression between and within key stages, and improvements

² Young, M. & Muller, J. (2014) - On the Powers of Powerful Knowledge

³ Toward an understanding of when prior knowledge helps or hinders learning

⁴ Knowledge in the national curriculum encompasses more than the recall of facts and figures. It generally covers both substantive knowledge - established facts and widely accepted concepts that are drawn from academic disciplines (such as 'a sentence contains a subject, verb and object'); and powerful knowledge - which can help build a shared frame of reference (such as historical reference to a space as 'empty as the Marie Celeste', quoting Shakespeare's 'break the ice', or understanding supply and demand to understand how prices can unexpectedly change).

⁵ By 'subject specific disciplinary skills', we are referring to those complex cognitive skills that are often domain or subject specific and best developed by teaching them within a given subject discipline. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and creativity are best developed in this way. Surma, T., Vanhees, C., Wils, M., Nijlunsing, J., Crato, N., Hattie, J., Muijs, D., Rata, E. & Wiliam, D. (2025) - Developing Curriculum for Deep Thinking: The Knowledge Revival (page 46).

are needed to the current national curriculum to enable pupils to achieve a depth of understanding within subjects. For example, a secure understanding of plants' requirements such as air and light in primary science supports a deeper understanding of photosynthesis and food chains that is necessary to master content in secondary biology.

Similarly, it is vital that the curriculum links content across subjects clearly, so that teachers can, for example, easily see what maths students need to know before relying on these concepts in physics where they may need to calculate speed or density. Providing a national curriculum that clearly sets out these links will help teachers to fully embed literacy, oracy and numeracy right across the curriculum. Taken together, these changes will support teachers to sequence their own curricula, and create more opportunities for teachers to stretch pupils, for example by applying content to different contexts and making connections between subjects.

We will therefore ensure that the national curriculum revised programmes of study prioritise core concepts in each subject and are coherent within and across subjects. We will also create an online and machine-readable⁶ national curriculum which visually represents the links within and between subject areas and gives connections to prior learning, helping teachers to contextualise learning across traditional subject boundaries.

The Review found that the current programmes of study for foundation subjects lacked detail. The Review is clear that foundation subject specifications do not need to be as detailed as those for core subjects, but many could benefit from being more specific than they are at present⁷. As the Review points out, greater specificity does not necessarily mean higher volume of content in these subjects, but more clearly setting out the most important content. A lack of specificity can hinder effective sequencing and lead to variation in what is taught, which – in turn – hampers good transitions between key stages. It can also lead to overloading of the curriculum as teachers try to cover everything in equal depth.

The Review has identified that improved sequencing could have benefits for key stage 3 where pupils are entering secondary school, allowing pupils to build on what they already learnt in key stage 2 and helping teachers to plan lessons so that they are not repetitive, disengaging or overly focussed on what they will be assessed on at key stage 4. A well-sequenced curriculum will also allow pupils to achieve mastery and depth of understanding, enabling them to access the more advanced parts of the curriculum with greater ease. **We will ensure that programmes of study have the right level of specificity to support effective sequencing between key stages, with a particular focus on foundation subjects.**

⁶ Text that is scannable by a computer including AI.

⁷ The national curriculum framework sets out the 'core' and 'foundation' subjects required at each key stage – the core subjects are English, maths and science but foundation subjects vary by key stage.

We value the professionalism and creativity of teachers in bringing the curriculum to life, and the work they do to ensure the curriculum is inclusive, stretching and adapted to the needs of all their pupils, including those with SEND. Through the process of drafting the programmes of study, we will review the level of content in each subject, to ensure that, taken together, the revised national curriculum allows for sufficient space in the school day to make this a reality for children. **We will ensure that, where the curriculum contains greater specificity, it still allows flexibility to choose lesson content and how to teach it. We will also maintain the expectation that the national curriculum is only part of a wider school curriculum.** We will continue to include both statutory and non-statutory content within the national curriculum to communicate intent, where necessary, without restricting autonomy.

We agree with the Review that the national curriculum and the resources that support it, should reflect our modern society and diverse communities. Our aim is for the curriculum to be both a mirror, in which every child can see themselves and their communities reflected, and a window through which every child is connected to the world beyond their existing horizons and perspectives. **This means that every child should have access to classic and historical works, and that programmes of study are drafted to provide a range of experiences, and sufficient scope and space to draw on different examples in developing their school curricula.** For instance, this could include learning about the contribution of cotton mills in Lancashire and Yorkshire during the Industrial Revolution, the Bristol Bus boycott, or the changing landscape of the Norfolk coast due to erosion. **We will ensure that, in the drafting process, programmes of study are suitably modernised and refreshed to allow teachers to draw on a range of figures and content that best suit the needs of their pupils, build cohesion not division and paint a picture of a modern and forward-looking Britain.**

The Review has been clear that the content of the revised national curriculum should be teachable within school time, whilst also allowing space for it to be part of a wider school curriculum and for enrichment. For this to be achieved, the curriculum will need to be drafted in a way that allows the necessary space and time for pupils to master content, as well as teachers having the time to deliver stretching and engaging lessons. **We will draft the new national curriculum keeping in mind the teaching time typically available to schools in each key stage and test our approach with teachers and curriculum designers.**

The curriculum should be enriching in every single subject, including the arts subjects which are a fundamental part of the rich and broad education. The arts subjects are an entitlement rather than an optional extra and are disciplines in their own right, with unique pedagogies that the best schools teach with expertise and rigour. For example, the study of creative subjects can allow pupils to harness the process of creative endeavour, generating original works, fluency of communication and teamwork. Under this government, access to a high-quality arts education will not be the preserve of the

privileged few, but the entitlement of every child. **That is why we are committing to revitalise arts education as part of the reformed national curriculum and through high-quality support for teachers of these subjects.** In addition to our continued investment in music hubs, we are launching a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education, promoting arts education and enabling high-quality teaching through a teacher development offer.

High standards must mean high standards for all

As the Review set out, the evidence shows that most pupils are succeeding through the current curriculum and assessment system. We launched the Curriculum and Assessment Review as a first step towards addressing the “existing blocks to progress and good outcomes” – especially for those who are from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, have special educational needs or disabilities, or are otherwise vulnerable and to stretch the most able pupils to achieve even higher⁸.

While the Review’s recommendations are designed to enhance opportunities for every child, they will be particularly beneficial for these groups of pupils. Our very best schools are uncompromising on standards, inclusive and ambitious for all children. High standards start with high expectations for every pupil, regardless of their starting point. This is true for those with high prior attainment, and those who face barriers. We know high standards and inclusion should be two aspects of a unified concept. Removing barriers to engagement and attainment means responding when children have additional needs and recognising that those needs will evolve and change as children grow-up. It means ambitious leadership, high quality adaptive teaching, and evidence-based support that prioritises early intervention. The combination of high standards and inclusion is particularly important for the many children who will face barriers to learning at some point over their childhood, whether temporary or permanent.

Pre 16, subject-specific recommendations will, once implemented, help to further advance opportunity – for example, the changes to the curriculum in English and maths will support every child to achieve essential knowledge and skills; and the science recommendations will support more pupils to study triple science at GCSE and be exposed to a wider range of career and study pathways. Refining our assessments and accountability measures will recognise the strengths and abilities of all students and will ensure a more inclusive education system. Post 16, improved pathways and English and maths will ensure students at all levels have access to clear routes – whether they want to specialise in an occupation or are undecided on which career choice they want to make.

The ability to read well exposes young people to the joy of being transported to another world and is essential for accessing the school curriculum. Reading expands young people’s imagination, exposes them to new ideas and challenging perspectives and can foster creativity – this is why we are making 2026 the National Year of Reading. Currently, 20% of children are not reaching the standard of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, and an even higher proportion (25%) do not go on to meet the expected standard in reading at key stage 2. We must raise reading standards for all

⁸ Curriculum and Assessment Review - terms of reference

children from the early stages of their education, and work with schools so they have the tools they need to focus on those pupils who need extra support.

Our publication 'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life' sets out how we will deliver on our ambition to set thousands more children up with the best start in life delivering our Plan for Change milestone of a record proportion of children being school ready by 2028. We will do this by making early years education and care more accessible, higher quality and through strengthening our new Best Start Family Service, so every family gets the early support they need to set children up for life. From September 2026 we are expanding our RISE English Hub support for reception-aged children, focusing on improving reading, writing and early language skills through training and funding for schools. Building on these commitments to make reception year a priority, we want schools to achieve more for children from the start of primary:

- **We are setting an ambition for 90% of children to meet the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check by the end of Year 1⁹** through an improved focus on the children that struggle in the earliest years¹⁰. Many schools already achieve this, and we will support more schools to do the same.
- We will **reinforce our expectation that all primary schools use a systematic synthetic phonics programme** and ensure staff are kept up to date with the necessary training and resources.
- We will **require systematic synthetic phonics programmes to give schools the tools and training they need to identify children at risk of falling behind and act early to give them extra support.**
- To further drive improvements for the 20% of children who currently do not pass the phonics screening check and need additional support, we will **double the reach of our Reading Ambition for All** continuous professional development programme to over 1,300 primary schools from academic year 2026/27. This programme helps children with SEND to access phonics, supporting the development of their reading skills and recognising that they may need smaller steps and more time achieve fluency.
- **We will also train more teachers to support children's reading fluency** - as the essential bridge between phonics and comprehension – reaching over 600 schools this year. We want all schools to be able to develop whole school reading strategies and support those pupils who have reading needs. We will therefore provide all secondary teachers with access to new reading training from January 2026. We plan to reach at least 75% of secondary literacy leads, by the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year.
- We have published our **Writing Framework** which provides schools with guidance on the most effective, evidence-based approaches to teaching early writing from

⁹ Currently 80% meet the expected standard. Phonics screening check attainment, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

¹⁰ Phonics | EEF

reception through to the end of key stage 2. We will support teachers to implement this guidance, including through new support via RISE English hubs for writing in reception.

We also know that children with¹¹ a strong foundation in maths are more likely to achieve across the curriculum^{12,13}. For many pupils, maths is working well, from primary school through to GCSE and post-16, where maths is the most popular A level. However, 26% of children do not meet the expected standard in maths at key stage 2, 31% of pupils do not attain level 2 in maths by 16 and not all pupils gain the deep understanding they need to equip them with the knowledge and skills for life, work and the future.

We will go further to support children by **expanding the reach of Maths Champions** enabling more children to build a strong understanding of number in their early years, and building on our reception offer to ensure more children reach the early learning goals as they move into key stage 1. **As children move through school, we will expand our Securing Foundations in Year 7 programme** from academic year 2026/27 to ensure that secondary school teachers are better equipped to support children with gaps in their understanding, particularly those that did not meet age-related expectations in maths at the end of key stage 2. We will also support higher-attaining pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue to excel in their maths studies through our Higher Level Maths Achievement Programme. This new initiative, offered through the Advanced Maths Support Programme, will support students from 400 schools across England, to stretch and inspire them to continue to achieve highly in their GCSE Maths and to progress to A level Maths and Further Maths. This includes both teacher professional development and student activities focused on mastering demanding topics and developing mathematical problem-solving skills.

Key stage 3 should be an important and engaging phase for all pupils. It is the first time children have subject specialists for every lesson, drawing from the content of the national curriculum and accessing new opportunities for enrichment in often larger secondary school environments. But too many children find the transition hard, with sharp increases in disengagement¹⁴ and non-attendance¹⁵, and a pattern where too often initially high-achieving children from disadvantaged backgrounds fall behind¹⁶. This includes white working-class children – the largest cohort of disadvantaged pupils¹⁷, who

¹¹ Attainment by characteristics - ages 16 to 25' from 'Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

¹² Coordinating mathematical success: the mathematics subject report - GOV.UK

¹³ Key Stage 2 attainment and lifetime earnings - July 2025

¹⁴ Mind the Engagement Gap: A National Study of Pupil Engagement in England's Schools

¹⁵ 'Absence by pupil characteristics' from 'Pupil absence in schools in England', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

¹⁶ Disadvantage in early secondary school, Nuffield Foundation

¹⁷ 'FSM eligibility by ethnicity or national curriculum year group' from 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

by secondary school score lowest on a range of measures of engagement¹⁸. Looking at the 2023 to 2024 academic year, we can see disadvantaged pupils were approximately 10 months behind non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 but approximately 19.1 months behind by the end of key stage 4¹⁹.

A refreshed national curriculum in line with the principles above will have the greatest benefit for those students for whom key stage 3 is not working. **Improved sequencing and focus will improve both transition between key stage 2 and key stage 3, and progress during key stage 3. We will ensure that the reformed key stage 3 national curriculum builds effectively from key stage 2 in every subject**, immediately ensuring consolidation and stretch. To ensure pupils are engaged and grow in confidence, we will avoid the risks of content being repeated in key stage 3 or standards being set too low. We will support teachers to see the links between key stages through the new digitised national curriculum. **We will also provide more powerful data insights**. For example, we will test with schools how we can support them to get more value from key stage 2 test question-level data, allowing them to spot pupils who show the ability to achieve more by the time they get to secondary school.

Every secondary school needs to give sufficient priority to organising and strengthening key stage 3, driven by a clear vision of a rich and stretching curriculum backed with high-quality assessment, and a broader focus on a rewarding school experience. School leaders should ensure that pupils in key stage 3 benefit from the full three years of the key stage, with a strong transition in place followed by time for breadth of experience, depth of learning and wider enrichment. Pupils should experience the same quality of resources in key stage 3 as they do in key stage 4, including being taught by experienced staff. Schools should also find ways to recognise pupils' achievements at key stage 3 so that their personal, social and academic accomplishments are celebrated. Many schools already do this well and there are excellent models to draw from that demonstrate what can be achieved.

We will launch a new key stage 3 Alliance as part of our RISE offer, which will mobilise and spread best practice regionally and locally. This will support schools to access and develop excellence in key stage 3, spotlighting and collaborating on key issues including the critical transition from primary, teaching and curriculum, and strengthening data at key stage 3. We will work in partnership with the sector to develop the alliance and launch it early in the new year, supplementing existing support.

¹⁸ The Engagement Platform

¹⁹ The most recent statistical data that shows the disadvantage gap is from 2024 to 2025; KS2 'Disadvantage gap index' from 'Key stage 2 attainment', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK; KS4 data: 'Disadvantaged gap data' from 'Key stage 4 performance', Permanent data table - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK. The 2023 to 2024 data shows the gap in months based on the Education Policy Institute's estimates (see <https://epi.org.uk/annual-report-2025-disadvantage/>)

We also know that some pupils need further support in key stage 3 to become fully secure in the foundations of reading, writing and maths. Our expectation is that every secondary school is equipped to identify those pupils and put the right interventions in place to ensure they are both able to access the key stage 3 curriculum and are well prepared to succeed at key stage 4. This is particularly critical when it comes to pupils' ability to read, as the gateway to accessing all other curriculum subjects.

The Review recommended diagnostic tests in English and maths in Year 8 that focus on the key elements of the curriculum, to support teachers to address gaps in understanding before pupils progress onto key stage 4. Identifying these gaps in understanding is critical and we expect all secondary schools to do so as part of their ongoing formative assessment from the beginning of Year 7 onwards. To support this, **we will expect all schools to assess pupil progress in writing and maths in Year 8 and will support them to draw on a range of high-quality products to do so.**

However, we consider that weaknesses in reading are the most critical to be resolved in the first years of secondary school, as the fundamental skill that enables children to access and engage with the entire curriculum, from maths to computing or music. We need to go further to ensure schools are consistently identifying and supporting pupils who are struggling and understand their own progress in supporting reading compared to that of other similar schools. **We will therefore introduce a new statutory reading test for all children to be taken in Year 8, designed to check both fluency and comprehension.** This will drive reading progress in key stage 3 and provide a clear picture of standards in reading across the country, ensuring that pupils receive the support they need from Year 7 onwards. Like the phonics screening check, school-level results will not be published. However, individual schools will receive their own pupils' results and will be able to access national, regional, and local authority data to benchmark their performance.

As well as helping schools to strengthen their understanding of pupil progress in key stage 3 through **assessments** and **by comparing their students' progress to students in similar schools**, we will work with the key stage 3 Alliance and providers of assessment tools and data products to provide more insight on key stage 3 progress.

Ofsted's new framework supports these ambitions for key stage 3, and training for inspectors will support them to evaluate the extent to which schools' key stage 3 curricula are well-planned, sufficiently broad and ambitious, and that pupils develop the appropriate knowledge and skills at key stage 3.

As the Review recommends, we intend to retain a single national curriculum which serves as a core entitlement which every pupil can access. **We are legislating through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill so that academies will be required to teach the refreshed national curriculum alongside maintained schools.** This will ensure that parents and carers have certainty over the core concepts in their child's education and that there is a floor beneath which this cannot slip. The national curriculum

is not the entire curriculum but an underpinning of what every child is entitled to know, which schools build on locally. Schools will continue to remain responsible for deciding how their school curriculum brings those core concepts to life in their choices of historical events, physical and human geography, and novels, for example. This will allow them to create dynamic learning environments where pupils can flourish.

Whilst the national curriculum is a core offer setting out what every pupil should know, improving how it is taught will have marked benefits for those who are currently not achieving all they could, including children with SEND who are academically able but may need some additional support. Adaptive teaching and formative assessment are essential to helping pupils with different starting points make strong progress, including those with high prior attainment. To ensure all pupils benefit from the refreshed national curriculum, **we will ensure that core training throughout a teacher's career, has a strong focus on high-quality adaptive teaching, formative assessment and high expectations for all.** This includes initial teacher training and the early career framework, which now features significantly more content on adaptive teaching and SEND, with a full review planned for 2027. Our national professional qualifications also embed inclusive practice throughout, and the leading teaching national professional qualification equips middle leaders to support colleagues and lead professional development. A full review of the national professional qualification suite began in January 2025, in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation, to strengthen the evidence base for adaptive teaching and identify best practice for supporting pupils with SEND. **We also support the recommendation to develop evidence-led resources to support curriculum adaptation for all children and young people, including those with SEND.** We will work in collaboration with experts and school leaders to create new Curriculum in Practice resources: a flexible suite of adaptive teaching strategies, case studies and real-world examples tailored to different phases of education. In addition, Oak will continue to design digital resources that are easily adaptable by teachers to meet the specific needs of their pupils, including those with SEND. For special schools and alternative provision, we recognise there is an important role for these schools in providing an appropriate curriculum for their children, and we will continue to explore this with them.

A good-quality curriculum should also challenge those who are learning at greater depth by allowing them to deepen their learning, exploring concepts in more detail, applying content to different contexts, and making connections between subjects. Pupils should readily have opportunities for academic enrichment that extends and challenges their boundaries and fuels their love of a subject, including competitions, events and Olympiads amongst groupings of local schools and at national and international level. **We will support teachers to identify and challenge pupils who have more to give in the classroom or who are not yet achieving what they possibly could.** This does not just mean focussing on a named group of typically high-attaining pupils, but making sure that all pupils are stretched and challenged. Oak will continue to develop a range of AI tools and curriculum materials that support teachers and enable pupils to be stretched and

challenged. Oak's AI Lesson Assistant, Aila, will make it easier to challenge high-attaining students by adapting content to their needs and abilities, such as encouraging them to make connections between subjects.

Recognising that many schools are already teaming up and creating pockets of excellence across the country to motivate and engage these pupils, we will also draw on the expertise of the RISE teams to seek out, optimise and learn from local and regional partnerships across trusts, local authorities and the wider education community to support pupils working at greater depth. At a minimum, we want schools to work together to support stretch and share best practice on what works well. There are also lots of academic enrichment and excellence programmes available, in the arts, science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, English and the humanities, but the offers are sometimes complex to navigate. We will help schools to identify effective programmes and get the best out of them.

Preparing young people for a changing world

The Review's Call for Evidence showed that parents, young people and employers were particularly interested in knowledge and skills that will help young people shape the future and provide them with the ability to deal with changes and challenges in their future career.

The way that information is shared, received and created has radically changed in the last three decades and we think the revised curriculum should help young people to think critically about difficult issues in an informed way, in a world where facts are increasingly disputed. The Review has emphasised the value of secure knowledge, the process of questioning and critical enquiry and weighing up evidence across information and sources. In the context of rapidly changing social and economic challenges and the emerging presence of disruptor technologies, we agree that young people who are secure in this will be able to draw on what they already know, navigate an often-complex world and differentiate fact from opinion or assertion.

In line with this, the Review has highlighted demand for more applied knowledge and skills in the curriculum, including financial, digital and media literacy, as well as climate education and oracy. We welcome the Review's focus on these important areas and have set out below how we plan to take forward these recommendations. In addition to these, **when refreshing our national curriculum and GCSEs in individual subjects, we will identify where subject-specific disciplinary skills are not clearly described or not emphasised adequately, and ensure these are properly reflected in those subjects' programmes of study**, for example, creative thinking in computing, critical thinking in history or problem solving in maths.

The Review has recommended that we ensure that pupils in primary school are taught essential citizenship content through a **new statutory requirement to teach citizenship in key stages 1 and 2**. We agree with this recommendation and consider it important including for introducing learning on financial and media literacy, climate change and democracy and law into primary education.

We agree that it is essential that children and young people learn about the importance of money and how to manage it, early in their education. We also agree with the Review that current references to financial education in the maths and citizenship programmes of study should be strengthened and the relevant content sequenced so that content can be applied to practical situations, context and problems. **When reforming the programmes of study for maths and citizenship, we will therefore ensure that key concepts relevant to financial education such as calculating interest are first introduced in maths**. Making citizenship compulsory in key stages 1 and 2 gives us the opportunity to **strengthen pupils' foundational understanding of financial education at an early age and explore how citizenship can provide more opportunities to apply these concepts in a relevant context**. We will also provide updated examples of good content to reflect the new curriculum, through digital resources from Oak and through the Money

and Pensions Service's role in coordinating a strategy to improve financial education provision.

We agree with the Review that the computing curriculum should be the main vehicle for teaching about digital literacy, and we are confident that **delivering the computing recommendations will provide more pupils with valuable digital skills that are essential for the future**. It is also clear that, in some subjects, digital methods now influence the content and how it is taught. We will work with experts to assess the validity of digital practice in these subjects, the evidence of whether this can be done robustly and whether it merits inclusion in the new curriculum. Where it does, **we will include a requirement for the relevant digital content in those subjects' programmes of study and we will ensure that it aligns with the computing curriculum**, to reduce the risk of duplication.

We understand the importance of future-proofing the curriculum, whilst reflecting the reality of today. The refreshed curriculum will teach pupils AI literacy, how to use data to complete tasks and solve problems, as well as learning about bias in technology. **We will also replace the computer science GCSE with a broader offer that reflects the entirety of the computing curriculum whilst continuing to uphold the core principles of computer science such as programming and algorithms, and explore the development of a level 3 qualification in data science and AI**. This will ensure that more students are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to understand and use emerging technologies in their future studies and careers, and to support our commitment to expand education pathways, set out in the cross-government AI Opportunities Action Plan²⁰.

We agree with the Review that a strong, secure and established body of knowledge is the first step in arming young people with the tools to protect themselves from mis- and dis-information and to scrutinise what is put before them. The ability to critically analyse, challenge claims and assess sources are important cognitive skills that are already developed in subjects like history, English and science. We must strengthen these skills for students to critically engage and challenge the world of information they now have at their fingertips. By making citizenship compulsory in primary, we will introduce all pupils to key content including media literacy, financial literacy, law and rights, democracy and government and climate education to enable children to be informed and active participants in society. Covering these issues in citizenship will ensure we continue to focus on schools' role in developing fundamental British values, including of mutual tolerance and respect. These principles will be extended to the secondary core content to reflect the age range of pupils and will focus on more complex content, particularly digital elements of financial literacy, such as fraud and scam prevention.

²⁰ AI Opportunities Action Plan - GOV.UK

As the Review has highlighted the ability for young people to identify and challenge mis- and disinformation is an increasing concern amongst parents, teachers and young people themselves. We agree with the Review that building media literacy and the skills for young people to critically engage with and assess information from a range of sources is increasingly important. We will therefore adopt the Review's recommendations to strengthen media literacy through English, to enable young people to critically engage with the messages they encounter through different media channels, and to better specify media literacy within both the primary and secondary citizenship curricula. **We will reform the English programme of study and the English language GCSE so that students learn to spot emotive language and study a range of transient texts²¹. We will also go further and strengthen the critical understanding of evidence and sources inherent in history through the refreshed programme of study.**

We also agree that it is vital to ensure that young people understand and value the democratic institutions and the democratic process. Citizenship education, reinforced across the curriculum, can play a vital role in making sure young people feel the democratic process is relevant to them, and that they understand how constitutional principles such as the rule of law protect them and benefit their lives. The Review, in particular, highlighted the opportunity that is presented by the preparations for lowering the voting age to 16. **In implementing the changes to citizenship proposed by the Review, we will make sure that young people have access to the information that they need and look at how schools can capitalise on the greater relevance and engagement that the change in voting age will bring.** We also want to build partnerships across the education sector and beyond, so that pupils can learn about other key parts of our state and social structures outside of lesson time as well (such as the role of charities and the Armed Forces).

Equipping children and young people to thrive in a rapidly changing world therefore means enabling them to understand and meet the global challenge that climate change presents. **We will take the opportunity to enhance the climate education content which is already present in the national curriculum, in the subjects of geography, science and citizenship. We will also include sustainability within the design and technology (D&T) programme of study and sustainable practices within the citizenship primary curriculum.** We agree with the Review that key concepts on climate education should be introduced earlier in the curriculum and will ensure that the relevant programmes of study contain this at primary level. We also want to go further on this and ensure that more people can engage with and develop respect for the natural

²¹ 'Transient' or 'ephemeral' texts means texts that are effectively not permanent, such as blog posts or social media posts. Analysing these is considered a key skill in terms of media literacy and weighing up evidence, or learning to identify fake news.

world. We will therefore **consult on the subject content for the natural history GCSE**, as confirmed earlier this year.

The Review noted that changes to curriculum content are only part of the picture and that teaching also has an important part to play through the use of climate-related examples and resources to teach existing curriculum content. The National Education Nature Park, funded by DfE, has a website which hosts free resources and activities for all education phases across a wide range of subjects. These are aligned to the curriculum and quality assured by experts, giving educators trusted information that allows them to teach about sustainability and climate change with confidence, in subjects where climate education is a core part of the curriculum content and in other subjects.

We also welcome the Review's focus on oracy. As well as supporting high standards as a valuable teaching strategy, expressing oneself fluently and communicating well is crucial for life and work, and an important vehicle for social justice. We will make sure that communication skills inherent in curriculum subjects are more clearly expressed through revised programmes of study. We will revise the English and drama programmes of study to exemplify the use of speaking and listening, as well as ensuring that the reformed **English language GCSE focusses on the features and use of language as a form of communication**.

We will also create a new oracy framework to sit alongside the national curriculum that will support primary teachers to help their pupils become confident, fluent speakers by the end of key stage 2. The framework will be underpinned by evidence-based pedagogical approaches for teaching this vital skill. Through the development of the oracy framework, we will seek to provide teachers with guidance on how to formatively assess and support pupils' oracy, using the best available evidence and research and building consensus amongst sector experts. We will consider the role of non-statutory assessment for oracy in light of that work. We will also support schools to implement this best practice through professional development opportunities designed to support teachers in ensuring all children benefit from high quality oracy education.

At secondary, we recognise that literacy and oracy are both general skills and subject-specific, and that teachers require support to teach students how to read, write and communicate effectively in each of their subject disciplines. We will therefore publish a combined **secondary oracy, reading and writing framework** that brings together guidance on these topics, to support teachers to connect and use all three in their teaching and to embed literacy and oracy across the entire curriculum as part of a whole school strategy. This will build on our primary frameworks for reading, writing and oracy that aim to support teachers to ensure that each child secures these foundations in preparation for key stage 3, and will avoid teachers needing to seek out subject-specific guidance on these skills.

Looking beyond the Review, we want to explore opportunities to work with employers to create opportunities that bring the curriculum to life for pupils, helping them to understand the relevance of their learning to their future career and find a passion for a future that inspires them to stretch themselves. Careers programmes should broaden young people's horizons and tackle assumptions about what the next steps will be for young people from different backgrounds. All learners, including those with SEND, should be encouraged and supported to consider the widest possible range of careers. This is why our statutory careers guidance incorporates the updated Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance, emphasising the importance of meaningful encounters with employers and employees. We have set out the first steps towards the government's ambition of two weeks' worth of work experience for every pupil through key stages 3 and 4. Early piloting has shown that this approach allows children to access multiple workplace experiences across different industries and occupations and offers greater flexibility to schools and employers. We want to ensure that every child, whatever their background, is ready for the future world of work.

We also want to ensure that pupils, as well as acquiring a solid base of knowledge and skills, can develop their social and emotional capabilities and have the opportunity to practice these personal attributes that they will need to navigate a changing world. Our updated statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) guidance sets out that "schools should support pupils to develop strategies for self-regulation, perseverance and determination, even in the face of setbacks". **We will support teachers to better understand pupils' needs and how they can support social and emotional development both through their everyday interactions and through teaching of mental wellbeing content in RSHE such as resilience.** Some studies have suggested that, whilst these attributes are not easily taught, there can be benefits for students who have the opportunity to practise them²². The national curriculum already provides many opportunities for students to practise these. For example, physical education (PE) allows students to practise team work, while drama allows pupils to practise communicating. **We will ensure that the refreshed national curriculum identifies opportunities for pupils to practise these attributes.**

²² Improving emotion regulation and communication for children: A pre-post trial of a school-based approach - ScienceDirect.

Pre-16 subjects

The Review has proposed changes to each subject which are guided by their overarching curriculum principles. We welcome and accept all the Review's subject recommendations across the pre-16 curriculum.

We are committed to ensuring every young person, regardless of background, receives the rich and broad education they deserve, spanning a wide mix of subjects. As part of this, we reaffirm the importance of the foundation subjects in the national curriculum which play a vital role in providing a well-rounded education such as PE, citizenship and computing, as well as the important role of religious education (RE) and RSHE.

Subject recommendations

Art and design

Art and design stimulates and challenges pupils to evaluate, respond to, participate in, experiment with, and create their own works of art, craft and design. It supports pupils to develop their creativity and expression, build practical skills and ultimately enables them to contribute to the culture, creativity and economic success of our society.

We agree with the Review that the art and design curriculum is generally working well and there is much to be celebrated, including continued high GCSE entries. While the flexibility it currently offers is welcomed by many, we recognise the challenges the lack of detail can pose, particularly for non-specialist teachers. We want to ensure all pupils receive high-quality curriculum provision in art and design that motivates them and sets them up well to progress to further study. To ensure this is the case in every setting, we agree with the Review's proposals to add further clarity to the programmes of study.

In doing this, we will exemplify the knowledge and skills that pupils should develop, including through their own creative practice. We will consider how a new programme of study can set clear expectations about the teaching of a broader range of artists and designers. We will also support the teaching of a broader range of media, including digital media in line with our broader approach to digital literacy, while maintaining the importance of drawing and painting.

We also agree with the Review's conclusion that the art and design GCSE is generally working well but that improvements need to be made to the volume of assessment. **We will consider, working with Ofqual, how we can clarify and streamline the range and volume of work pupils need to produce for their non-examined and final assessment, while maintaining high expectations on standards of work.**

Citizenship

It is important that the reformed curriculum provides a clear framework to ensure that pupils acquire the essential skills and knowledge they need to be active, informed and responsible citizens, and that this needs to start from an early age.

As we have already confirmed, and in line with the Review's recommendation, we will look for the earliest opportunity to make citizenship a new statutory requirement for key stages 1 and 2 and ensure that the programme of study is tightly focused on the essential content pupils should know at primary and secondary, aligning with but not duplicating other parts of the curriculum and improving progression to GCSE. The secondary curriculum will both mirror and be a graduation of this core content, encompassing the vital threads of government, law and democracy, climate education, financial and media literacy.

Computing

All young people should be equipped with the digital capabilities required for an increasingly technology- and AI-enabled future and we want to bolster the pipeline of digital talent by encouraging more pupils to consider computing qualifications. We will continue to invest in the National Centre for Computing Education, equipping teachers to confidently teach about topics such as digital literacy and AI, and supporting them to improve their schools' computing provision.

As we have already outlined, we will rebalance the computing curriculum as the Review suggests, to ensure pupils develop essential digital literacy whilst retaining important computer science content. Through the reformed curriculum, pupils will know from a young age how computers can be trained using data and they will learn essential digital skills such as AI literacy. We will replace the computer science GCSE with a GCSE in computing that better reflects the breadth of the curriculum. **We will also explore introducing a new level 3 qualification in data science and AI, to ensure that more young people can secure high value skills for the future and that we cement the UK's position as a global leader in AI and technology.**

Design and technology (including cooking and nutrition)

We will revise the design and technology curriculum and GCSE subject content to focus on developing pupils' design capability and introduce the concept of sustainability within the programme of study. Taken together, these changes will help the country to tackle challenges around building a sustainable economy through more discerning use of materials and processes and better reflect the needs of the design sector as a whole.

As part of this broader reform, we will enhance the identity of food education by establishing it as a distinct strand within design and technology. We agree with the

Review's recommendations that it should be more clearly distinguished as a discrete element of the design and technology curriculum and renamed 'food and nutrition'. Whilst maintaining the important emphasis on cookery, **we will make the programme of study more specific to prepare pupils for life and potential future careers in the food sector. We will also carry out a review of the level 3 vocational study options for food science** to determine whether the suite of qualifications available at this level adequately supports a strong pipeline into higher education and careers.

English (including drama)

We agree with the Review that it is essential that pupils master the key foundations of literacy in order to achieve well across the curriculum. **We will ensure there is greater clarity and specificity throughout the English curriculum, particularly for speaking, listening and drama, alongside the oracy framework we will introduce.**

We agree with the Review's finding that there are opportunities to teach grammar in a way that better enables pupils to master composition and write well, and address the widespread concern that grammar is often taught in isolation rather than for the purpose of being used effectively in writing. We think that whilst fronted adverbials for instance, allow for richness and depth, they often lead to cluttered and fussy sentences if not used properly. Similarly, the subjunctive mood can provide nuance but is also widely seen as overly theoretical at this stage and not helping pupils to write well.

We will therefore review the grammar content in the primary curriculum, and the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) will review the grammar, punctuation and spelling assessment to address these concerns. We will also consider whether the sequencing of some of the grammatical content should be changed, including whether some of the more complex concepts should be moved into key stage 3. This will mean that more time can be spent ensuring that grammar concepts at primary level are taught in a way that enables pupils to master them and use them in context.

As well as writing and grammar, we have already outlined the importance of reading to access the entire curriculum. We will introduce a statutory reading assessment for all pupils in Year 8, designed to test both fluency and comprehension, driving progress in reading and providing valuable data on progress nationally. We will support teachers through this by providing new reading training for secondary teachers in January 2026 and Reading Ambition for All continuous professional development programme to help pupils with SEND access phonics. Prior to the Review, we had heard calls for significant reform of the key stage 4 programme of study and English language GCSE subject content, and the Review's position supports that view. **We will reform both, to reflect the subject's core purpose of reading a wide range of texts fluently, critically and using that understanding to inform writing, as well as the correct use of grammar, punctuation and spelling and the acquisition of a strong vocabulary. Through these changes, pupils will be able to explore the features and use of English**

language as a form of communication, through a wide variety of types of text, including those that are short-lived or can have multiple definitions.

We think that every child should be able to study the works of those who have made a lasting and influential impression on the literary world. We agree with the Review's recommendation that **the curriculum should continue to draw on a recognised body of English literature, including at least one play by Shakespeare, one 19th-century novel, poetry, and fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards.** We will also consider the amounts of literature required to avoid an increase in content. Beyond this, we want schools to have the flexibility to choose a range of texts and authors, including those of local significance. These changes will ensure that schools and teachers can continue to draw on a full and extensive literary body of work from a variety of rich sources, whilst having the choice to determine the best collection of literature to engage their pupils.

Media literacy is an increasingly important skill to enable young people to identify “fake news” and to spot different types of mis- and disinformation, especially online. Secure, well-founded knowledge is central to this; and we agree with the Review that exposure to a wide range of texts, including transient texts, is important so students can understand how arguments are constructed through different types of media, and are exposed to the various ways in which language can be used to persuade. **The reformed English programme of study and English language GCSE will expose students to the study of a wide range of texts supporting them to analyse and challenge arguments, building media literacy.**

We agree with the Review that drama plays an important role in a broad curriculum, and that it supports the development of a range of knowledge and skills including creativity and oracy. We consider drama to be an important artistic discipline in its own right, helping pupils to find their voice and express their ideas, on stage and off.

We agree that the brilliant practice seen in many schools already and particularly at secondary is to be celebrated and we want to ensure this is reflected in the curriculum, supporting progression to further study. As the Review suggests, we will consider whether further detail and clarity at primary could enable a stronger drama offer within English and will create a discrete drama section within the key stage 3 programme of study.

We want to ensure that teaching of drama at GCSE connects to and builds from pupils' experience at key stage 3, so the subject continues to be engaging for them and prepares them for future study. We also recognise the opportunity to promote further diversity in the body of work studied at GCSE. As recommended, **we will review GCSE drama subject content against the balance of assessment methods and approaches to achieve this.**

Finally, the importance of clear speaking and listening skills is very clearly set out by the Review. We will act on this by introducing an oracy framework, which will complement the reading and writing frameworks and will guide teachers through the evidence that supports the best teaching approaches.

Geography

We agree with the Review that the subject does not need significant change, and **we will update and refine the programme of study and GCSE subject content with modest changes**, to support pupils and teachers. As recommended, changes will support a better understanding of the disciplinary requirements in the national curriculum and in the GCSE, ensure the content is updated where needed, including in relation to climate education, and clarify and integrate the fieldwork requirements. **We will also improve the GCSE subject content to support better progression, deepen understanding and remove unnecessary repetition across topics.**

History

We agree with the Review on the importance of applying disciplinary knowledge, skills and approaches, including how the past is studied and how historical claims are constructed. This is core to teaching history to the highest standard and should be clear in our curriculum requirements which all pupils will benefit from. A high-quality history education should support pupils to understand Britain's past and our connections to the wider world, as well as develop knowledge about other civilisations and people in and of themselves. **All pupils should have a robust understanding of our nation's history, and we will continue to include it, and strengthen it, in the national curriculum and the subject content of qualifications.**

Building on the current curriculum and subject content, **we will improve the programme of study to support pupils to critically appraise historical sources and develop strong substantive and disciplinary knowledge, and we will reform the GCSE to support the acquisition of that knowledge. In reforming the curriculum, we will ensure that teachers can reflect the innate diversity of British history, including British Black and Asian history.** We will continue to include the Holocaust as a compulsory topic within key stage 3, as confirmed by the Prime Minister last year.

We understand the Review's concern about curriculum overload arising and **we will be clearer about which content in the programme of study is non-statutory** to provide more clarity for teachers on flexibility and optionality, including how local history and contexts can be studied to teach history through where children and young people live.

Languages

Languages are a vital part of a broad and balanced curriculum, equipping pupils with the communication skills, cultural awareness and linguistic foundations needed to thrive in a globalised society. We welcome the Review's emphasis on improving clarity and consistency in primary languages and strengthening transition from primary to secondary. A more coherent and sequenced approach will support deeper language acquisition and sustained motivation. **We will work with experts to strengthen the primary languages curriculum and clarify expectations for pupil progress, as well as define core content in French, German and Spanish.**

We are going further and want to ensure that the country has the language capabilities that it needs for the future. Starting at primary, we are committed to enhancing early language education through to secondary to build a strong foundation for language skills and to increase the language pipeline. **Continued investment in the National Consortium for Languages Education (NCLE) will support teacher training through high-quality professional development and new support models, with national reach.** NCLE's new Language Network is built around Language Educators Online, a new free, online platform dedicated exclusively to the professional development of languages teachers to enable them to motivate and engage all pupils and improve learning outcomes, including for higher attainers and those who need additional support.

Our ambition is for more pupils to develop strong language skills. We want to recognise pupils' achievements earlier than GCSE and motivate them to continue studying and developing their language abilities. **We will explore the feasibility of developing a new qualification which enables all pupils to have their achievements acknowledged when they are ready rather than at fixed points.** We will learn from models such as the Languages Ladder, which supported and recognised progress in languages. We will optimise the use of technology to minimise teacher workload and make assessment more engaging for pupils. We are working closely with stakeholders to establish the viability of such a qualification, making sure it meets the needs of schools and pupils, before making any decision on whether to introduce it.

We want to work with the sector to understand successful approaches to supporting the languages pipeline, including at A level and degree, to meet future economic needs and grow our future supply of teachers. We will learn from approaches such as the Hackney model highlighted by the Review, and the 'Languages for All' programme which has increased the number of students studying modern languages at A level in Hounslow.

We want to make more of the opportunities that technology presents. We will explore **how AI and education technology (edtech) can support stronger outcomes in language education, including exploring how these tools** can help deliver consistent curriculum content and support more coherent language provision across key stages, as well as reduce teacher workload.

Maths

We are pleased that the Review considers the focus on maths in school to be appropriately strong. For many pupils, maths is working well, from primary school through to GCSE and post-16, where maths is the most popular A level. However, 26% of children do not meet the expected standard in maths at key stage 2, 31% did not achieve level 2 by age 16, not all pupils gain the deep understanding they need to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for life, work and the future, and there are gaps in attainment for different pupil groups.

We will review the curriculum from key stages 1 to 3 with a particular focus on resequencing content (particularly in the ‘number’ domain) to deepen pupils’ understanding, including via non-routine problem solving.

The timed nature of the multiplication tables check is important to its purpose of assessing fluent recall of times tables, however, we will work with the STA on how to minimise any unintended impacts. As part of its work on assessment, STA will also consider revisions to end-of- key stages 1 and 2 maths test content once changes to the curriculum are confirmed.

We will review the key stage 4 curriculum and GCSE content to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose. As part of this, we will evaluate the formulae and equations included in the content to determine whether pupils should still be required to memorise them or whether they can be provided in the exam. We will also consider **whether targeted, modest adjustments might help emphasise depth of understanding**, alongside a new expectation for schools to assess pupil progress in maths in Year 8 using a range of high-quality tools, to ensure that any gaps in understanding are addressed in good time before key stage 4.

Music

A good-quality music education is a powerful tool for connection and expression. It should be creative and challenging and equip pupils with the knowledge and tools to appreciate, understand and make music, bringing school communities together.

We welcome the Review’s focus on equity in music education. Equitable access starts with a clear, effective curriculum that delivers a rigorous foundation for all, and, for music, the current programme of study is not achieving that. We agree that reform is needed to ensure our music curriculum is supporting teachers to give every child a strong start in the subject and agree this is critical to improving quality and equity. **We will reform the programme of study to clarify and exemplify its purpose, aims and content, to ensure that pupils develop a strong foundation in the three pillars of musical understanding – technical, constructive and expressive – including how to read music.** Our continued investment in music hubs and new National Centre for Arts and

Music Education will support schools to deliver this content effectively with high-quality teaching.

A clearer, more rigorous programme of study is critical to enabling pupils to continue their musical study should they wish to. We recognise, though, that the qualifications offer must also be suitable. Pupils generally perform well in GCSE music, and key knowledge defined in the GCSE subject content provides a foundation for further study. **We will review music qualifications at key stage 4 to ensure they support musical understanding and progression effectively, and that the distinct purposes of music GCSE and technical awards are sufficiently clear.** As part of this, we will consider whether current GCSE content and assessment could be better suited to the discipline, including enabling alternatives to instrumental performance (using technology, voice, or both) more effectively.

We recognise the Review's concerns around access to music and that some schools require support to deliver music well, including from specialist teachers, particularly to help pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in learning to read music and play instruments. We continue to invest in instrument stocks through the music hubs. Our £25 million investment will provide over 130,000 additional instruments, equipment and other music technology by the end of 2026, with around 40,000 already in the hands of teachers and pupils. We will consider how we maximise the impact of this investment to ensure the opportunity of and access to a reformed music curriculum is fully realised.

PE (including dance)

We welcome the Review's recommendations to strengthen the national curriculum for PE, recognising its role in supporting pupils' wellbeing and educational outcomes.

We will revisit the aims of compulsory PE across all four key stages to ensure a scaffolded approach to developing fundamental movement skills and participation in sport and physical activity. **We will also consider how specific elements like swimming, dance and outdoor and adventurous activity are presented to ensure they support quality teaching and progression.** Additionally, **we will work with Ofqual and stakeholders to review the PE GCSE subject content** to make sure that they establish a purpose for the GCSE distinct from the key stage 4 curriculum, and that the PE GCSE activity list can support wider participation, including from pupils with disabilities. We will ensure that the key stage 4 PE curriculum has a clear purpose for all pupils so that schools recognise the need to protect two hours of PE time for all pupils throughout their time at school – securing a foundation for continued participation in sport and physical activities.

Dance holds a unique position in the curriculum as both a physical activity and a creative art form. It provides an engaging route within PE for many pupils and complements what pupils learn in their engagement with sport and other physical activities. We welcome the Review's acknowledgement of the creative as well as physical aspects of dance and, following its recommendation, **we will add further detail to content on dance within**

the PE programme of study, considering how this can enable more consistent teaching of dance and an effective pathway to further study. We recognise the workforce challenges identified by the Review. Both the new National Centre for Arts and Music Education and new PE and School Sport Partnerships will support schools to build capability and confidence in the teaching of dance.

We also want to ensure that the GCSE also reflects dance as a creative art form, is reflective of professional best practice, and enables pupils to study a broad and diverse body of work. **We will review GCSE subject content and balance of assessment methods and approaches to achieve this.**

RE

We welcome the Review's work on RE and the careful consideration that the Panel has given, both to how better to support the teaching of the subject, and its potential inclusion in the national curriculum. **We will be shaped and guided by the sector on this important issue and, to take further steps on moving forward, there will need to be a clear shared position from the sector on the future of RE.** Sector consensus should include views from faith, non-faith and wider school stakeholders on an RE curriculum that could be deliverable within all schools as part of a well-sequenced and structured national curriculum. If the sector reaches a consensus on whether this is achievable, we will consult on the content of a draft RE curriculum and on proposed changes to the legislative framework within which RE sits. As part of this we would seek to ensure that sector consensus should underpin future updates to any new RE curriculum.

Science

We welcome the Review's recognition that it is vitally important that science, as a core curriculum subject, is made accessible to all pupils and provides them with the knowledge and skills they will need to be active and informed citizens, while also giving them the best opportunity to be able to pursue careers in STEM. **We welcome the Review's recommended changes to the curriculum and GCSE and will reform the programmes of study to reflect these.** As recommended, changes will ensure more consistency and cohesion in primary science, ensure that the purpose and expectations of high-quality practical work are more clearly articulated and reduce the unnecessary content duplication and complexity that leads to overload in the subject while maintaining, and in many cases, strengthening the rigour and depth of what is taught. As with maths, as part of this work we will evaluate the formulae and equations included in the GCSE content to determine whether pupils should still be required to memorise them or whether they can be provided in the exam.

The Review also highlighted the lack of scientific principles leading to climate change in the current programme of study, as well as the effects of human behaviour on the environment. **We will review this and update the content so that the greenhouse effect, as well as carbon emissions, burning of fossil fuels and deforestation are**

more explicitly understood in the curriculum as contributing factors towards effects such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events.

We support the Review's recommendation to introduce a triple science entitlement. We believe that all pupils who can benefit from studying triple science should have the opportunity to do so. To make this a reality, **we will work with schools to understand the barriers to entry for triple science, including workforce challenges, and support schools to develop a triple science offer, ahead of introducing a statutory entitlement.** We will also continue to invest in tackling physics teacher shortages through the Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching programme.

Key Stage 4 Technical Awards

We are pleased that the Review has acknowledged the recent changes to strengthen Technical Awards and welcome the Review's recommendation to provide a period of stability for the current suite, allowing them to fully embed before any further, substantial changes are considered. We think that having access to a strong body of robust vocational qualifications at school to complement a strong academic core to 16 for every child, is essential to help pupils consider the wide range of academic, vocational and technical pathways available to them in later life.

We will review the current suite of Technical Awards when we have more comprehensive data (from 2027 onwards) **looking at progression, alignment with post-16 pathways and fitness for purpose. We will also need to undertake a further review once V Levels are established, to ensure that we can create constructive pathways to level 3.** This will enable us to make evidence-based decisions about whether any further changes are needed at that point. In the meantime, we will maintain the current moratorium on new qualifications, unless there is strong evidence of demand for new Technical Awards or substantive feedback on existing ones. We will also work with Ofqual and awarding organisations to consider whether changes to GCSEs have implications for Technical Awards that should be factored into any future reforms of these qualifications.

Enrichment

The Curriculum and Assessment Review recognises that the national curriculum is not the entirety of a school's curriculum nor their whole offer to pupils.

Evidence shows that **extra-curricular enrichment participation is associated with higher educational achievement**^{23,24,25} and positive outcomes in adulthood²⁶. For example, a report from the Education Policy Institute found that children who attended sport clubs were more likely to be in education or employment as young adults, and children who attended clubs for hobbies, arts and music²⁷ were significantly more likely to progress to higher education than those who did not²⁸.

But the enrichment offer varies significantly from school to school. When surveyed, the average number of activities offered by primary schools was 7 (out of 19 possible activity types). However, 21% offered 4 or fewer. The average offered by secondary schools was higher at 13, but there was variation here as well with 15% offering fewer than half of the 19 possible options (see Annex A).

And participation varies too. Around one-third of secondary school children said they did not participate in any activities in the 2024/25 autumn term. This was higher for pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) compared to those who were not (35% vs 25%)²⁹.

Breaking this down by ethnicity, non-participation was higher for white pupils eligible for FSM compared to white pupils who were not FSM eligible (40% vs 26%). When looking at all ethnic minority pupils, the non-participation difference was smaller and not statistically significant (28% FSM vs 23% not FSM). The data did not allow for further disaggregation, so the results for specific ethnic minority groups may differ ³⁰.

Looking at vulnerabilities, children in need had lower participation levels (63% vs 72%) and pupils with SEND were also less likely to be involved in sports and physical activities (38% vs 53%)³¹.

²³ Farb, A.F., Matjasko, J.L., 2012. Recent advances in research on school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Developmental Review* 32, 1–48

²⁴ Shulruf, B., 2010. Do extra-curricular activities in schools improve educational outcomes? A critical review and meta-analysis of the literature. *Int Rev Educ* 56, 591–612

²⁵ Laurus Trust - Student outcomes and Progress - Education Policy Institute, 2024

²⁶ Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes - Education Policy Institute, 2024

²⁷ These findings are for students who attended clubs for hobbies, arts and music but who did not attend sports clubs.

²⁸ Access to extra-curricular provision and the association with outcomes, Education Policy Institute, 2024

²⁹ Parent, pupil and learner voice: omnibus surveys for 2024 to 2025, December 2024 wave

³⁰ Results for specific ethnic categories were unavailable owing to insufficient sample sizes

³¹ Analysis of DfE PPLV survey December 2024. Supporting tables are in Annex A

These differences in access and participation demonstrate why these subjects and opportunities must be embedded within the school curriculum as well as extracurricular activities. Arts, music and PE are important curriculum subjects which we will strengthen through the Review's recommendations and ongoing support for high quality teaching. This is essential to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the same access to wider enriching experiences.

In addition to a high-quality enriching curriculum, every child should be entitled to a strong and well-rounded extracurricular offer. This offer both supports and extends beyond the curriculum and school day – opportunities to discover interests, ignite passions, grow talents and, above all, to enjoy learning.

We will set out a new core enrichment offer that every school and college, in every community, should aim to provide for all children – beyond the statutory curriculum. Of course, many schools already excel at this offering a diverse range of activities that are woven into their ethos, all delivered using resources within and outside the school. These school activities are often enhanced by working with local clubs, voluntary sector organisations or national partners such as the Royal Shakespeare Company or the Youth Sport Trust. We want to enable and build such partnerships to spread opportunities across our schools.

To frame this joint working, we are working with sector experts, schools and colleges on the development of a new set of benchmarks, to set out the steps every school and college can take to provide every child with access to a strategically planned and ambitious enrichment offer. This will go hand-in-hand with the steps we have taken to ensure high quality careers advice and work experience, by providing a wider range of hands-on experiences that get children out of the classroom and into real-life situations to broaden their aspirations. **We will bring together support for schools and colleges to follow these benchmarks which will set out that, at a minimum, every school should deliver an enrichment offer which provides access to civic engagement; arts and culture; nature, outdoor and adventure; sport and physical activities; and developing wider life skills.**

Figure 1: Enrichment activities



Parents should have the confidence and knowledge that their children will have access to these experiences, wherever they live. To ensure that parents know how schools are meeting the benchmarks and that schools are recognised for putting an offer in place, we will **provide information on schools' enrichment opportunities in the new School Profiles**, based on access to the five categories set out above. School Profiles will bring together useful and up-to-date information about schools together in one place. We will consult on how enrichment is embedded in School Profiles, ensuring they are co-designed with the input of schools and frontline expertise. As set out in Ofsted's new inspection framework, pupils' access to opportunities that broaden their experiences and enable them to develop their talents and interests, is considered under personal development. When Ofsted updates its inspection toolkits next year, it will take account of the new enrichment benchmarks, in a similar way to the Gatsby Benchmarks currently included in relation to careers education.

Sufficient time in school is crucial to enable this. **We expect all state-funded, mainstream schools to deliver a minimum school week of at least 32.5 hours.**

Any schools not following this guidance should take steps to meet this minimum expectation as soon as possible. Whilst we support schools in exploring ways of implementing flexible working models for their staff, **we also expect all state-funded schools to be open and educating pupils 5 days a week, morning and afternoon,** except in exceptional circumstances such as those relating to religious observance. This is important both for the children themselves and for working parents.

To help schools deliver high-quality enrichment opportunities for all pupils, both within and beyond the curriculum, we will look to build a picture of what is on offer against the five categories – exploring how best to gather this information at national and local level, including via existing data sources. This will help us to identify cold spots and direct support where it is needed most. There is already a wide range of support being put in place, including:

- We are already preparing to deliver enhanced access to enriching experiences that help to build skills and foster a love of learning through **PE and School Sport Partnerships**, to support the delivery of high-quality curriculum PE, expand opportunities for extra-curricular sport and physical activity, and with support from the Department for Culture Media and Sport build strong links between schools, local clubs and National Governing Bodies of sport.
- We will continue to invest in our national network of **music hubs**, delivering music education and opportunities in and beyond schools across England.
- **An £88 million investment in Building Creative Futures** will go further to transform the opportunities available to our children. This includes £22.5 million of new funding over three years to create a tailored enrichment offer in up to 400 schools.
- **We are targeting £132.5 million of Dormant Assets funding to support the provision of services, facilities, or opportunities to meet the needs of young people**, particularly those from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds. This will include work within and in partnership with schools, including funding to guarantee a library for all primary schools by the end of this parliament. More broadly, this funding will increase disadvantaged young people's access to enrichment opportunities in the arts, culture, sports and wider youth services, aimed at improving wellbeing and employability. We will work to strengthen this partnership with schools in order to reach children and young people and ensure it supports delivery of these enrichment ambitions, within the requirements of the Fund.

Government is not doing this alone. We recognise that philanthropy and civil society have a unique interest and ability to innovate, mobilise quickly and reach communities in ways government alone cannot. There are a broad range of partners that work alongside schools and colleges to help deliver a high-quality enrichment offer for all children and young people. We welcome the commitment from organisations such as the Duke of

Edinburgh's Award, National Youth Theatre, Clore Duffield Foundation, Into Film, Raspberry Pi Foundation, Young Enterprise, Youth Sport Trust and Natural History Museum to bring their expertise, passion and programmes to enable schools and colleges to deliver a strong and well-rounded enrichment offer to all pupils. We will continue to work with these partners and more to help strengthen **enrichment opportunities** for all young people.

Assessment, accountability and performance measures

Primary assessment

We welcome the Review's recommendations that suggest moderate changes to key stage 2 national assessments and as we have already confirmed, we have no plans to radically change the shape of assessments. STA will **explore ways to improve participation in optional key stage 1 tests**. We agree with the importance of ensuring that schools assess the progress of all pupils in their phonics knowledge.

We agree with the Review's findings on writing and want to ensure that pupils can write confidently and fluently by the time they reach secondary school. **STA will improve the current writing assessment processes at key stage 2**. This will support pupils to acquire a level of writing proficiency by the time they reach secondary school. **We will sequence changes alongside changes to the content of the English curriculum at key stage 2**, meaning that the current assessment arrangements will continue for an interim period. We recognise the importance of grammar for clarity of communication, comprehension and personal impact, so will continue to test this at the end of primary. **We will also ask STA to amend the test to ensure it better reflects assessing composition and application of grammar and punctuation**.

We agree with the Review's recommendations to look to strengthen peer moderation and embed good practice to improve moderation between years where schools are not selected for external moderation. We will also consider what improvements can be made to external moderation. **We will ask STA to ensure that any changes to the English curriculum are reflected in the teacher assessment of writing framework**.

When the curriculum has been revised, STA will revisit the assessments to see what relevant changes need to be made to them. We recognise that any reforms will have varying levels of consequence for different actors in the system and, as part of our testing, we will engage schools, local authorities, representative bodies and Ofqual to develop these reforms, particularly when determining any changes to external and peer moderation.

Secondary assessment

Currently, 25% of pupils arrive at secondary school having not met the key stage 2 standards in reading, and 26% of pupils arrive not having met the corresponding standard in maths³². This gap continues to widen for some pupils by key stage 4. To secure the necessary foundations to go on to succeed at key stage 4 and beyond, it is

³² Key stage 2 attainment, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK

imperative that teachers can ensure, early on, that their pupils are on track to do well and make progress towards key stage 4, remediating where necessary. The Review has highlighted the importance on securing core key stage 3 knowledge and skills, in order to progress successfully into key stage 4 and GCSE, and has placed an important focus on building momentum all the way from key stage 2 to key stage 4.

The Review has recommended diagnostic checks in key stage 3 for English and maths focused on key elements of the curriculum. As set out above, we will introduce a statutory reading test for all pupils in Year 8 and require schools to assess pupil progress in writing and maths, drawing on a range of high-quality tools designed to support a consistent understanding of progress in key stage 3.

We welcome the Review's recommendations about how GCSEs, AS and A levels should be assessed, and therefore we think the design features of these qualifications should be preserved, as they have contributed to the credibility, fairness and perceptions of qualifications. We also accept the evidence that we are an international outlier in terms of time pupils spend in formal assessments in key stage 4. As the review has stated, students in England typically sit 24-31 hours of exams at the end of Year 11. This is higher than in many high-performing jurisdictions, including Ireland (16 hours), New Zealand (18 hours) and Canada (Alberta) (10 hours). As GCSEs are reformed, **we will work with Ofqual and awarding organisations to reduce examination time by on average 2.5-3 hours overall for the average student taking eight or nine GCSEs.** We will ensure that any amendments maintain high standards and protect the integrity and validity of the assessment system. We will also work with Ofqual and awarding organisations to ensure that accessibility implications are fully considered for all young people throughout the qualification development process, including those with SEND.

We agree with the Review that exams provide a fair and reliable indication of what young people know, understand and can do. However, some subjects include content that cannot be wholly assessed by exams. We therefore agree with the Review that non-examined assessment (NEA) should continue to be used if it is the only valid form of assessing this content. We also agree with the Review that new technologies, such as generative AI, carry risks and implications for some forms of NEA. **We will work closely with Ofqual and the sector to understand the risks and mitigations needed – including exploring alternative assessment methods where necessary – in order to ensure GCSE, AS and A level assessments remain fair, valid and reliable.**

Students missed out on vital years of education and development during the COVID-19 pandemic, and evidence shows this continues to have an impact. While before the pandemic students were provided with some formulae and equations in assessments, since then students have been provided with all relevant formulae and equations. We welcome the Review's recommendation to evaluate this approach, to determine whether students should be required to memorise and recall each formula and equation as well as being able to apply them when provided. We will ask subject experts to consider this when reviewing and developing subject content.

The Review acknowledged that on-screen assessment may deliver some benefits but evidence of the potential for wider implementation is still in its early stages. We want to realise the benefits and opportunities that on-screen assessment may present, and **we will work with awarding organisations and Ofqual on this so that any wider use of on-screen assessment in GCSEs and A levels is introduced in a way that is fair, proportionate and manageable.** We want to allow space for innovation, but we must also manage the risks, maintain public confidence and protect the quality and integrity of qualifications.

Performance measures

We agree with the Review that accountability measures should encourage schools to offer a curriculum at key stage 4 that is broad, balanced and stretching, ensuring coverage of subjects mostly likely to support young people's life chances and the needs of society and the economy, while enabling them to pursue their interests.

Reflecting the importance of a curriculum that supports high standards, we will develop and consult on an improved version of Progress 8 and Attainment 8 that balances a strong academic core with breadth and student choice. It is essential that all students retain this academic core, but we believe the current structure has hampered progress in subjects which strengthen our economy and society including the arts, and therefore should make changes which recognise the value of these subjects and the importance of a broad pre-16 curriculum.

Improvements to Progress 8 and Attainment 8 will take effect after consultation. In advance, **we will remove EBacc headline and additional measures at key stage 4.** This will take effect for the key stage 4 performance measures for the 2025 to 2026 academic year to be published in autumn 2026.

Our proposal for the improved Progress 8 and Attainment 8 model will retain the current rules on English and maths but will have two dedicated slots for science subjects and four breadth slots. The vast majority of pupils take both GCSE English literature and English language (in 2024, 94% of pupils in state-funded schools entered GCSEs in both English language and English literature), and therefore one of the English GCSEs will likely fill a breadth slot for most pupils. At least two breadth slots must include subjects from two of the three categories below:

Category A: Humanities

Category B: Creative

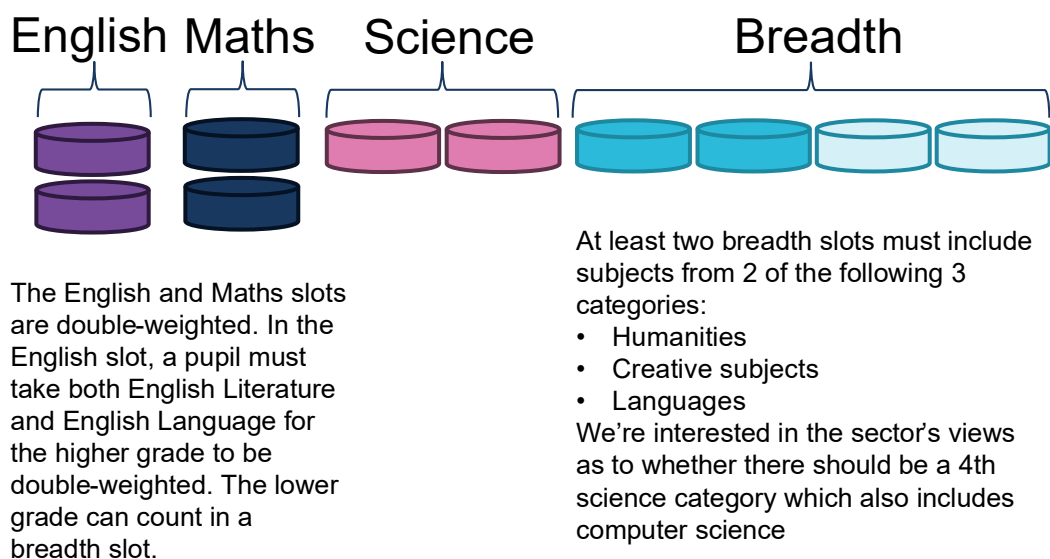
Category C: Languages

We will seek views on the need for a fourth category of science subjects, including computer science/computing. We recognise a fourth category will allow more choice and

specialisation in science, but are also mindful it may weaken the incentives to study a broad curriculum and subjects from the other three categories.

The remaining two breadth slots can be filled by any qualification eligible for inclusion in key stage 4 performance measures. For most pupils, one of these slots will likely be filled by the lower grade of GCSE English literature or GCSE English language.

Figure 2: Progress 8 and Attainment 8 proposal



We are publishing, in addition, detailed information on our proposed Progress 8 and Attainment 8 model.

Post-16

The government has recently published the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper and an accompanying consultation document. We welcome the Review's approach to simplifying and strengthening the post-16 qualification landscape, whilst helping students to acquire solid foundations of a good English and maths GCSE pass. English and maths continue to be at the heart of our education improvement agenda from early years to adulthood, demonstrated by our response to the Review's recommendation on English and maths in schools. That focus continues in the 16-19 phase and **we welcome the Review's reinforcement of the need for students who have not achieved a level 2 pass in English language and maths GCSEs to continue to work towards securing these qualifications as part of their 16-19 programme of study.**

Level 3

As we set out in the recent White Paper³³ and the Post-16 level 3 and below pathways consultation³⁴, **we accept the Review's recommendation to develop a third pathway (V Level) for students to sit alongside A levels and T Levels.** We will make 'V Levels' the only pathway of vocational qualifications at level 3 for young people. These will sit alongside A levels and T Levels, providing simplicity and clarity as well as quality.

We want V Levels to be clearly distinct from A levels and T Levels, with nationally set content linked to occupational standards. We expect these qualifications will be small enough (similar in size to an A level) to be effectively combined with other qualifications to allow students the flexibility to study different areas.

We will now work with awarding organisations, colleges, sixth forms, industry, higher education institutions and other sector bodies to ensure that this alternative pathway is fit for purpose. We are consulting on this to test the key design principles of the qualification, and other aspects that the Review has touched on, including subject areas, size, assessment and how best to transition from the existing landscape.

We believe that there is a strong rationale for V Levels to create mixed programmes of study and, where large qualifications are required, these should be T Levels. We agree with the Review that there may be a need for large qualifications in areas where there are not T Levels at present, and we launched a new Marketing T Level in September. We will look subject by subject at whether a large qualification is the best way to meet learner need and if so whether this warrants a new T Level. Our view is that having both large V Levels and T Levels will create confusion.

³³ Post-16 education and skills white paper - GOV.UK

³⁴ Post-16 level 3 and below pathways - GOV.UK

T Levels continue to grow and offer great outcomes for students. This summer's results illustrate that this maturing offer is seeing better results every year. We have been refining the approach on content, assessment and Industry Placements to make T Levels more accessible and manageable at scale while retaining their quality and rigour. As recommended by the Review this work will continue. We will work with Skills England, employers, Ofqual, awarding organisations, schools, colleges and the university sector so that more T Level students realise their potential and employers have the skills they need.

A levels are well regarded domestically and internationally and considered an essential part of the education system, as well as providing a benchmark for academic excellence. We have no plans to substantially reform A levels as they are generally working well but will consider their reform within our overall implementation plan, particularly in subjects where the Review has suggested GCSE-level change.

Level 2

We agree with the Review's recommendations on level 2 and **will develop two separate pathways: an occupational pathway to support students to progress into level 2 occupations, and a further study pathway that supports progression to level 3 study pathways.** This is the subject of our pathways consultation. We support the Review's steer that providers should give students high-quality advice and guidance to help students select the pathway that best supports their aspirations, whilst enabling students to move between pathways where needed.

We agree with the Review's proposals for the T Level Foundation Year. We will consider, and explore how best to implement, the changes the Review recommends as part of our planned consultation on our proposed changes to level 2 and 3 pathways in autumn 2025.

Level 1 and entry level

We support the Review's aspiration to have clear pathways for all students at level 1 and entry level. These students should have access to high-quality qualifications supporting progression to further study, employment, or to build core skills for life and work. We will ensure there are clear and coherent progression pathways through these levels and will consider what changes are needed to align with the proposed changes to level 2 pathways set out above.

Enrichment activity within 16-19 study programmes

We welcome the Review's recommendation of sharing best practice between 16-19 providers to ensure all students develop the important applied knowledge and transferable skills to step into adulthood. This complements the flexibility that 16-19 colleges already have to tailor their education programmes to the needs of their students, whom they know best. We recognise the importance of opportunities for personal development experiences in 16-19 settings. At this key moment in many young people's lives, enrichment activity can help them prepare to shape their world and thrive at work. We expect that this will help them with the skills and confidence to navigate the world of work, including gaining and keeping employment.

As previously mentioned, DfE is already developing guidance for schools to deliver a high-quality enrichment offer, through an enrichment framework. Working with college leaders, **we will extend this framework to further education settings**. This will improve the consistency of students' enrichment experience across the country by promoting highly effective practice. The principles set out in the framework will require schools and colleges to take a holistic, wholesale approach to prioritising enrichment; activity aligned with student preferences; and a greater emphasis on monitoring progress and outcomes.

Beyond enrichment, we want to improve join up between institutions to support students to stay in learning. To do this, **we will improve the transfer of information between schools, colleges and higher education providers**. As the skills white paper set out, this includes working with schools, colleges, local authorities and other organisations to track and share data on those at risk of becoming NEET, so that we can support their transition from compulsory education.

16-19 English and maths

We share the Review's affirmation of the value and importance of achieving at least a grade 4 in English and maths GCSEs. Higher levels of attainment in English and maths are strongly linked to improved opportunity, including higher earnings, better employment options, improved health and life satisfaction, and greater civic engagement and trust. We also welcome the Review's particular focus on better enabling and driving progress for students with lower prior attainment and we know these students have higher levels of disadvantage, SEND, or both. We want to see all students build the core knowledge, skills and confidence in English and maths that will enable them to show progress in their learning and feel that is valuable and recognised. We want students to re-sit exams only when they are ready to do so. And we want to support all providers in their continued efforts to improve outcomes for these students.

We agree with the Review's recommendation that we should take immediate steps to strengthen the condition of funding and accountability system. Our policy intent is set out in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. This academic year's English and maths condition of funding includes requiring providers to deliver a minimum of 100 hours of face to face teaching for each of English and maths for eligible students, increased numbers of students in scope of the policy, and sets out clearer guidance on which students would typically be suitable for entry into the November exam series, and which would not. We will continue to carefully monitor the impact of these changes, and we will continue to provide additional investment to support providers. The English and maths funding rate will increase by over 11% in the 2025 to 2026 academic year, and the disadvantage payments will increase by nearly 7%. We have set out measures to ensure providers are recognised for the progress their students make towards level 2. We have reinstated the 16 to 18 English and maths progress measure this academic year, for 2024 to 2025 data. We will revise this measure, and qualification achievement rates, to ensure they reinforce the need for sufficient time to be given to students to consolidate learning prior to exam entry. We will now begin full engagement with the sector on these changes and the timeline for their implementation.

We also agree with the Review's recommendation that we should explore opportunities to better incentivise effective practice across the sector. We will support all colleges and other providers to emulate the effective practice of the highest performing. As set out in our Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the Further Education Commissioner will work in collaboration with the sector to develop effective practice guidance. The recently expanded capacity of the Education Endowment Foundation will increase the evidence base on what works to ensure strong outcomes for 16- to 19-year-olds. Our Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper also set out our commitment to provide post-16 teachers and senior leaders with a comprehensive, national, evidence-based and visible professional development offer. This will include English and maths and will build upon the new continuous professional development programme support for 16-19 English and maths teachers already introduced in July 2025.

The Review recommends the introduction of new level 1 preparation for GCSE qualifications for English language and for maths at 16-19, to enable more students with prior attainment at grade 2 or below to make progress towards achieving level 2 in these GCSEs during 16-19 study. We have signalled in the Skills White Paper that we agree with the Review's assessment of the benefits that these qualifications would deliver, in conjunction with the wider reforms set out above. **We will now take this forward with the sector and Ofqual starting with a full policy consultation in spring 2026, to prepare for the introduction of the new qualifications.** The Review has recommended key design features for the new qualifications which we agree are desirable, and their consideration will be central to the development process. That process will also ensure that the design of the new qualifications aligns fully with the English language and maths GCSE curriculum.

Implementation of the recommendations

We agree with the Review's assessment that its recommended changes are ambitious but achievable. The changes we will make will build on the strengths of the current curriculum, assessment and qualifications system and so should be more straightforward to implement than the wholesale changes to the curriculum in 2013.

We know, however, that the changes we will be making will still require schools to update their curricula and lessons and we do not underestimate the work this will require. We will therefore ensure there is provision in place to support the sector to deliver the new curriculum so that teachers can focus on delivering brilliant lessons. **We will introduce a new digital and machine-readable national curriculum to support teachers to more easily sequence their school curricula.**

Technology, including AI, can play an important role in education – when based on robust evidence and rooted in educational practice. We want all schools to have the right tools for teaching and learning supported by a safe and effective edtech market. Government's role is to enable innovation and make sure that technology supports curriculum excellence, whilst making sure that pupils and their data are safe.

Teachers will shortly have access to all of Oak National Academy's new optional curriculum materials covering subjects for children aged 5 to 16. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and tailor these resources to create engaging lessons and curriculum plans. The materials include fully adaptable curriculum plans and digital resources for every lesson. Oak will provide schools with support to help them understand the changes to the curriculum and how to implement them, by providing updated materials to reflect the refreshed curriculum. Together with Aila they can reduce workload for teachers.

Raising standards of attainment is a national priority for our RISE teams, who will drive improvements in the quality of teaching in reading, writing and maths through our national network of RISE English and maths hubs. In addition to this, we have existing curriculum support programmes in languages, computing, physics, music and arts, and new support through our new National Centre for Arts and Music Education and PE and Sport partnerships. Taken together, these programmes will support teachers to implement the changes in the national curriculum in subjects where there are particular shortages of specialist teachers. **We will also support teachers to adapt the new curriculum to meet individual needs in their classrooms.** Content on adapting teaching and using formative assessment is embedded throughout our core offer of training at each point of a teachers' career – including all our national professional qualifications, and our specialist qualification in leading teaching supports participants to spread best practice within their school.

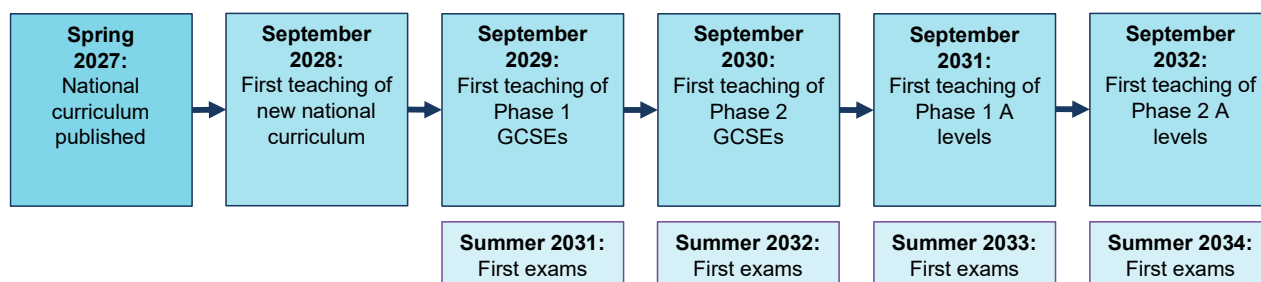
We have carefully considered the Review's suggestion that we take a staged approach to implementing the curriculum. We have balanced the workload implications for teachers

and the sector against the fact that the changes recommended by the Review are vital to raising standards for all pupils and that many of the changes have been long awaited by the sector. We also know that sometimes a phased implementation of a curriculum can create more disruption to teachers and to pupils – creating discontinuity and lack of clarity. Taking all of these factors into account, **we have decided that we should fully implement the new full national curriculum for first teaching from September 2028.**

We will ensure that schools have plenty of time to plan to implement the changes. **We therefore will aim to publish the final revised national curriculum by spring 2027 – giving schools four terms to prepare for the changes.** We will test the proposed new curriculum with teachers and curriculum designers and will draw on the right expertise to support us to produce new programmes of study so that we can consult the sector, pupils and parents. As part of our commitment to support the workforce, we intend to make clear what will change as a result of our reforms to the national curriculum and we will publish an outline of the key content that has changed, for each subject.

To ensure pupils experience a coherent curriculum as they progress from key stages 3 to 4, working with Ofqual and awarding organisations, **we will update GCSEs in national curriculum subjects in line with the Review’s recommendation, as well as religious studies.** Our aim is that some are ready for first teaching in 2029 and the rest for first teaching in 2030. **We will ensure both groups cover a rich and broad range of subjects. We will also seek to update corresponding AS and A levels to be ready for first teaching in 2031 and 2032, as the cohort progresses to 16 - 19.**

Figure 3: Implementation timelines



The Review has not identified specific issues with GCSEs, AS and A levels in other subjects, and we are cognisant of the burden on schools of too much change at once. **We therefore do not anticipate immediately updating GCSEs and AS or A levels in other subjects but will seek to review these subjects in due course.**

The timeline for implementing the other recommendations is outlined in the relevant sections above. This includes phasing key stage 2 assessments to ensure that pupils have sufficient time to learn the new curriculum before moving onto new assessments. **Changes to EBacc performance measures will take effect for the 2025 to 2026 academic year, to be published in autumn 2026. New qualifications to prepare students for level 2 English and maths will start with a full policy consultation in early 2026. We will also consult on changes to Progress 8 shortly.**

Future reviews of the curriculum and assessment

It has been over 10 years since the current curriculum was last reviewed. A balance needs to be struck between providing stability for teachers and regularly updating the national curriculum to account for technological and societal changes. We welcome the Review's suggestion of stability between curriculum reviews but note that the democratic process means that it will always be open to a government to decide whether it wants to review the national curriculum. **We will consider how best, in line with the Review's recommendations, to conduct light-touch updates in between longer-term holistic reviews,** listening to young people, teachers, employers and the wider sector, especially in subjects which may require more frequent changes, such as computing.

Annex A

Table 1: Proportion of primary and secondary schools by number of types of extracurricular activities offered and school phase, autumn term 2024/25

School phase	Number of types of activities offered	Count	Proportion	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
Primary	0 to 4	149	21.3%	17.7%	25.4%
Primary	5 to 9	396	56.6%	51.9%	61.1%
Primary	10 to 14	146	20.9%	17.4%	24.8%
Primary	15 to 19	9	1.3%	0.6%	2.9%
Secondary	0 to 4	6	1.3%	0.6%	3.1%
Secondary	5 to 9	63	14.1%	11.3%	17.4%
Secondary	10 to 14	200	44.9%	40.6%	49.3%
Secondary	15 to 19	177	39.7%	35.6%	44.0%

Base: School leaders, unweighted base (1,054)

Figures have been weighted. Question: "Which of the following extra-curricular activities has your school been able to offer for pupils this academic year?". Respondents were provided with 19 categories of extracurricular activities and the option to select that they have not been able to offer any that year. Schools may offer multiple activities within these broader categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: School and college voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 2: Mean number of types of extracurricular activities schools offered by school phase, autumn term 2024/25

School phase	Count	Mean	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
Primary	701	7.2	6.9	7.5
Secondary	447	13.2	12.9	13.5

Base: School leaders, unweighted base (1,054)

Figures have been weighted. Question: “Which of the following extra-curricular activities has your school been able to offer for pupils this academic year?”. Respondents were provided with 19 categories of extracurricular activities and the option to select that they have not been able to offer any that year. Schools may offer multiple activities within these broader categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: School and college voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 3: Proportion of primary schools by number of types of extracurricular activities offered and FSM quintiles, autumn term 2024/25

Percentage of FSM eligible pupil quintile	Number of types of activities offered	Count	Proportion	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
1	0 to 9	97	69.8%	59.8%	78.2%
1	10 to 19	42	30.2%	21.8%	40.2%
2	0 to 9	111	74.5%	64.8%	82.2%
2	10 to 19	38	25.5%	17.8%	35.2%
3	0 to 9	102	81.9%	72.1%	88.8%
3	10 to 19	23	18.1%	11.2%	27.9%
4	0 to 9	118	79.6%	70.4%	86.5%
4	10 to 19	30	20.4%	13.5%	29.6%
5	0 to 9	112	83.1%	73.7%	89.6%
5	10 to 19	23	16.9%	10.4%	26.3%

Base: Primary school leaders, unweighted base (479)

Figures have been weighted. Question: "Which of the following extra-curricular activities has your school been able to offer for pupils this academic year?". Respondents were provided with 19 categories of extracurricular activities and the option to select that they have not been able to offer any that year. Schools may offer multiple activities within these broader categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: School and college voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 4: Proportion of secondary schools by number of types of extracurricular activities offered and FSM quintiles, autumn term 2024/25

Percentage of FSM eligible pupil quintile	Number of types of activities offered	Count	Proportion	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
1	0 to 9	9	7.1%	4.1%	12.0%
1	10 to 19	124	92.9%	88.0%	95.9%
2	0 to 9	12	15.0%	9.1%	23.6%
2	10 to 19	68	85.0%	76.4%	90.9%
3	0 to 9	14	17.4%	11.2%	26.3%
3	10 to 19	68	82.6%	73.7%	88.8%
4	0 to 9	18	19.8%	12.9%	29.3%
4	10 to 19	73	80.2%	70.7%	87.1%
5	0 to 9	13	23.1%	13.7%	36.3%
5	10 to 19	42	76.9%	63.7%	86.3%

Base: Secondary school leaders, unweighted base (563)

Figures have been weighted. Question: “Which of the following extra-curricular activities has your school been able to offer for pupils this academic year?”. Respondents were provided with 19 categories of extracurricular activities and the option to select that they have not been able to offer any that year. Schools may offer multiple activities within these broader categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: School and college voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 5: Mean number of types of extracurricular activities schools offered by school phase and FSM quintile

School phase	Percentage of FSM eligible pupil quintile	Count	Mean	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
Primary	1	139	8	7.4	8.6
Primary	2	149	7.7	7.1	8.3
Primary	3	124	7	6.3	7.7
Primary	4	148	6.8	6.2	7.4
Primary	5	135	6.4	5.7	7.1
Secondary	1	134	14.3	13.9	14.8
Secondary	2	80	13.3	12.6	14
Secondary	3	82	12.9	12.2	13.5
Secondary	4	92	12.9	12.2	13.7
Secondary	5	54	11.7	10.8	12.6

Base: School leaders, unweighted base (1,042)

Figures have been weighted. Question: "Which of the following extra-curricular activities has your school been able to offer for pupils this academic year?". Respondents were provided with 19 categories of extracurricular activities and the option to select that they have not been able to offer any that year. Schools may offer multiple activities within these broader categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: School and college voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 6: Pupil participation in extracurricular activities through school by FSM eligibility among white secondary school pupils, autumn term 2024/25

FSM eligibility	Extracurricular participation	Count	Proportion	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
FSM	Participated	136	59.9%	53.5%	65.9%
FSM	Not participated	91	40.1%	34.1%	46.5%
No FSM	Participated	528	74.0%	68.0%	79.3%
No FSM	Not participated	185	26.0%	20.7%	32.0%

Base: White secondary school pupils (years 7 to 11), unweighted base (982)

Figures have been weighted. Question: “Since the start of this school year (in September 2024), which of the following extra-curricular activities, if any, have you taken part in at school?”. Extracurricular activity participation was assessed through whether or not respondents indicated that they had not taken part in any activities. Due to insufficient sample sizes, we have been unable to provide results for specific ethnic categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: Parent, pupil and learner voice (December 2024 wave)

Table 7: Pupil participation in extracurricular activities through school by FSM eligibility among ethnic minority secondary school pupils, autumn term 2024/25

FSM eligibility	Extracurricular participation	Count	Proportion	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
FSM	Participated	95	71.8%	62.2%	79.7%
FSM	Not participated	38	28.2%	20.3%	37.8%
No FSM	Participated	190	77.4%	66.1%	85.8%
No FSM	Not participated	55	22.6%	14.2%	33.9%

Base: White secondary school pupils (years 7 to 11), unweighted base (338)

Figures have been weighted. Question: “Since the start of this school year (in September 2024), which of the following extra-curricular activities, if any, have you taken part in at school?”. Extracurricular activity participation was assessed through whether or not respondents indicated that they had not taken part in any activities. Due to insufficient sample sizes, we have been unable to provide results for specific ethnic categories. Lower and upper confidence intervals the upper and lower bands of the 95% confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval is a range within which the true population would fall for 95% of the times the sample survey was repeated.

Source: Parent, pupil and learner voice (December 2024 wave)



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